

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-13

AID-20 EUR-25 DPW-01 RSR-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /139 W

----- 054594

R 101105Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4388

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 12409

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: AN QUANG SELECTS NEW SUPREME PATRIARCH, DEFERS ELECTION  
OF A NEW RECTOR

REF: SAIGON A-121 JUNE 26, 1973

1. ON JULY 8 AN QUANG UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH (UBA)  
SUPREME ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL (SEC) ELECTED AS EXPECTED  
94-YEAR OLD HUE VENERABLE GIAC NHIEU AS SUPREME PATRIARCH, A  
POST VACANT SINCE THE FEB 25 DEATH OF FORMER INCUMBENT THIEN KHIET.  
CHOSEN AS GIAC NHIEU'S PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT WAS ANOTHER CENTRAL  
VIETNAMESE BONZE, THE VENERABLE TRI THU. TRI THU'S SELECTION  
FOR THIS POST MAY BE VIEWED AS A SUCCESS FOR THE "MODERATE"  
CENTRAL VIETNAMESE FACTION IN AN QUANG, WHICH BACKED HIM FOR  
THE JOB WITH THE EXPECTATION HE WILL PROVIDE THE ELDERLY  
SUPREME PATRIARCH WITH NON-RADICAL POLITICAL GUIDANCE  
(SEE REFAIR). ANOTHER VENERABLE DESCRIBED AS A MODERATE,  
NORTHERNER DUC NHUAN, RETAINED HIS INFLUENTIAL POST AS  
SECRETARY GENERAL.

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2. THE SEC GATHERING ALSO SET DEC 10 FOR NEXT BIENNIAL UBA

NATIONAL CONVENTION. AN ELABORATE CEREMONY "INSTALLING" GIAC NHEN AS SUPREME PATRIARCH IS PLANNED FOR THAT DATE AS WELL.

3. THE DECEMBER NATIONAL CONVENTION WILL FILL THE CURRENT VACANCY IN THE POST OF RECTOR OF THE UBA HIGH SECULAR COUNCIL (HSC), OCCUPIED SINCE FEB 13 BY ACTING RECTOR THIEN MINH, A CENTRAL VIETNAMESE "MODERATE". THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE AGITATION TO UNSEAT THIEN MINH DURING THE SEC MEETING; A LETTER WRITTEN "IN BLOOD AND TEARS" WAS CIRCULATED, AND VARIOUS OTHER PETITIONS AS WELL. HOWEVER, THIEN MINH'S OPPONENTS, WHO GENERALLY REPRESENT SOUTHERN, MORE RADICAL UBA ELEMENTS, FAILED TO OBTAIN WHAT THEY SOUGHT, AN IMMEDIATE ELECTION TO REPLACE HIM. NEVERTHELESS, THIEN MINH'S OPPONENTS ARE CLAIMING THAT BETWEEN NOW AND DECEMBER, HE WILL BE "ALLOWED" TO FUNCTION ONLY IN A "CARETAKER", NON-POLICY ROLE.

4. COMMENT: AN QUANG REMAINS AS FACTIONALLY DIVIDED AS EVER. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE "RADICALS" WHO OPPOSE THIEN MINH AND HIS "MODERATE" ASSOCIATES HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CURTAILING THEIR INFLUENCES. THE MONTHS PRECEDING THE DECEMBER NATIONAL CONVENTION WILL SEE CONTINUED JOCKEYING FOR POWER ACCOMPANIED BY SOME BITTER IN-FIGHTING AT AN QUANG.  
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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